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# IDOLATRY.



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## PREFACE.

“Every man walketh in a vain show.” (Ps. 37: 6.)

We are apt to follow *vain things*.

*Idolatry* being such a great offense to our Maker, that anything that tends toward it should be avoided. This being so impressed upon my mind for a long time, that I was induced to have a Bible class consider it, one evening, and this is what I had to say:

I have now been asked by a number of people including ministers, to have it printed. I do so, hoping that it may be of some service.

We should seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit. And we have no right to expect His guidance, except we seek it through the study of God's Word.

Buffalo, N. Y., Aug. 26, 1908.

WM. L. JONES.

## IDOLATRY.

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That is worshipping *idols*; paying Divine homage to false gods, or created objects, or forces; or an inordinate veneration or love, or devotion for any person or thing.

An *Idol* is an image for worship. . .

It is *also* a CAUSE, or SOURCE OF ERROR; MISLEADING HABIT OF CONCEPTION, or of reasoning, a FALLACIOUS, deceptive *tendency*, an idolon.

An *Idolon*, a fanciful or *false notion*; *misconception*; a *fantom*, an image, or idol.

An idol may be pleasure, if that for which one lives and finds his principal joy, if it be *other* than *God*, *that* is his *idol*.

Our *time*, our *strength*, our *money*, may go for our *idol*.

*Fashion*, or any *vain thing* of the world, may be our *idol*.

They are “things of naught.” (Amos 6: 13.)

I will not make this sweeping statement, that

it was wholly on account of *idolatry* that caused our Lord to come into this world, and suffer death upon that *Cross*.

But this is certainly true, that the greatest evil that caused Christ to come upon the earth *was idolatry*.

Thinking more of that forbidden *fruit* than of *God's Word*.

Thinking more of wealth, or gold, or a show, than of God, then that is our *god*, then we kill, and commit all maner of crimes, for, and on account of our god.

Anything and everything that we put ahead of God, is our Idol.

An idolatrous worship of God, is any cause or source of *error*, in *His worship*; or misleading habit of conception, or of reasoning in that worship.

I leave it for you to say whether turning your back upon our Lord's command, "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth"; when you do your alms, and make a *parade*, *prayer*, or *praise service* over them, is not idolatrous worship.

It seems to me, that *it* plainly is.

Your *form* and *ceremony*, you set ahead of *God's Word*.

The first command that God gave was: "Thou

shalt have no other god before me.” (Ex. 20: 3.)

And that “the first and great commandment” was: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.” (Matt. 22: 37-38.)

Disobedience to these commands are treason against God.

All other crimes are petty crimes in comparison to wronging God our Creator.

“Ye shall make you no idols.” (Lev. 26: 1.)

Making anything your *idol* is the stepping stone to iniquity.

When the Lord was to come on the earth, *He ALONE* was to “be exalted.” (Isa. 2: 17. B. C. 760.)

“And the idols, He shall utterly abolish.” (Id. 18.)

Again we are told, through the same prophet: “The groves and images shall not stand up.” (Is. 27: 9.)

Even the cloth that covered the idols was “a <sup>u</sup>menstrous cloth.” (Isa. 30: 22. B. C. 713.)

No *parade, prayer or praise* service must be a cloth that covers our *idol*, that we set up *ahead of God's Word*.

Man's idols were to be “cast away.” (Isa. 31: 7.)



His “loftiness” “bowed down,” and his “haughtiness \* \* made low.” (Isa. 2:17.)

Then 90 years after our Lord had been on the earth, He says through St. John the Evangelist: “Little children, keep yourselves from idols.” (1 John 5: 21.)

Moses “took the calf and burnt it,” “and ground it to powder,” and mixed it with water, and made the Israelites drink thereof. (Ex. 32: 20.)

Asa, the third King of Judah, removed his mother “from being queen, because she had made an idol,” and he cut down her idol and “stamped and burnt it.” (2 Chron. 15: 16.)

It may be that there is no danger of any of us making an image of *wood, stone, or metal*, to worship.

But is there no danger for us to guard against in our worship of God by some *cause*, or *source of error*? or by some *misleading habit of conception*, or of *reasoning*? or by some *deceptive tendency*, and so commit idolatry?

Can we be sure that we are pleasing God, in all our forms of worship of Him, without we thoroughly understand what we are taught in His Holy Word, and *try* and follow *that* rather than the *world*?

We are told to look to God, and to His Word,

for our guidance and “instruction in righteousness.” (2 Tim. 3: 16.)

And nothing should draw us therefrom.

We are to worship the *Creator*, and not the *creature*. (Rom. 1: 25)—not some *false object* or *idol*.

To do otherwise is to do, as Hosea said Ephraim did, “feedeth on wind.” (Hos. 12: 1.)

That is, feedeth on that which is vain,—brings damage, rather than benefit.

Or as Isaiah said: “A deceived heart hath turned him aside; he feedeth on ashes (Isa. 44: 20.)

That is he *feedeth on* that which affords no nourishment.

Or as Jeremiah said: That “they have burned incense to vanity.” (Jer. 18: 15.

Let us remember that man’s vanities “provoked” God “to anger.” (Deu. 32: 21.)

To draw nigh to God with our mouths and with our lips to honor Him, while we disobey God’s written command, how can our hearts be near Him? And if our “hearts” are “far from Him,” in “vain” is our “worship.” (Isa. 29: 13-14; Mat. 15: 8-9.)

How should we feel, making an offering in churches, over the money taken up? Making a *parade*, *prayer* and *praise service* over it?

Asking God to accept the same in our way: As much as to say, “Lord, we know that this is not your way, which is “let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth” (Mat. 6: 3), but we ask You, Lord, to accept the same in *our way*, and bless the same in Thy work!”—

And we do this, Lord, as an act of worship!—Of worshiping Thee!

We all know that Christ purchased us by His death (Acts 20: 28; Rom. 14: 8; Gal. 3: 29; 1 Cor. 3: 23), so what have we to offer? We, and all we have *belong* to *Him*.

But some say, that this is not meant in fact, as an offering; they only call it such, as a vain word, and make the *parade*, *prayer* and *praise* service over it, without meaning it as an offering.

We must not forget, that it was the wicked that said:

“Let them not regard *vain* words.” (Ex. 5: 9.)

It is a good heart, that yields to God’s word, at the least suggestion.

It is the disobedient whose hearts are hardened by the most gracious and loving words of God.

To say, that nothing is meant, when the word offerings is applied to money taken up in churches and this *parade*, *prayer* and *praise service* is made over it: *THEN* it is a *vain word*, expressing

*no meaning*,—nothing in regard to our *Lord's act* of offering Himself.

How much worse is it, to take our Lord's *name* in vain? Which we are commanded not to do. (Ex. 20: 7.)

We are not guiltless if we do. (Deu. 5: 11.)

Can it be a less offence to speak of our *Lord's Act*, of offering Himself on the cross in vain words, in a meaningless manner, as a part of our public worship of Him? Should we not reverence our Lord's unselfish act, that accomplished so much for us, and *God's Holy word*, as we reverence His *Holy Name*?

Should we not for conscience sake, and in obedience to His will, and to promote His glory, do so?

We read: "Great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book." (2 Kings, 22: 13.) Are we secure from His *wrath* if we do not hearken to that *Holy Book*?

We are commanded not to "turn aside from following the Lord *with all our heart*." (1 Sam. 12:20.)

"And turn ye not aside \* \* \* for vain things, which cannot profit \* \* \* for they are vain." (1 Sam. 12: 21.)

We are further *commanded*, in regard to an



unclean person, or an idolator, “Let no man deceive you with vain words; for *because of these things* cometh the *wrath* of God. (Eph. 5: 6.)

But they take the money and make a *parade*, *prayer* and *praise service* over it, as though a *vain thing* might be consistent with the service and worship of God. There is no right for anyone, by his teaching or his example, or practice, because he is in authority to lay upon churchmen, or anyone attending divine service, anything not required by the Scriptures.

“For ~~as~~ it seems good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you, no greater burden than these *necessary things*.” (Acts 15: 28.)

This practice was connived at, and commenced a few years ago.

It was an innovation on the church service, which had existed for nearly 2,000 years; and is now held, not indifferently, but in many of the churches, the practice has been established as *part* of the worship of God!

The Lord God said:

“Let not your prophets and your divines \* \* deceive you.” (Jer. 29: 8.)

“Take heed that *NO MAN* deceive you.” (Mat. 24: 4.)

“Beware lest *any man* spoil you through *philosophy* and *VAIN DECEIT*, after the *tradition*

of *MEN*, after the rudiments of the *WORLD*, and *NOT AFTER CHRIST.*” (Col. 2: 8.) He knew what was coming when we were charged in this way.

To do such things, does it not show a lack of looking to God for guidance?

Let us remember that the Israelites, when they wanted a King, it seems that they simply showed a weakness in their religious character, and folly and indiscretion and a rebellious spirit, as well as ingratitude and a willingness to follow the world; rather than being obstinately impious or depraved.

It was at first more inattentive to the guiding hand of God, for they did not pretend to deliberately reject God’s authority. But the Lord said, that thereby “they have rejected Me.” (1 Sam. 8: 7.)

To Saul, King of Israel, the Lord said through Samuel:

“Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord?”

“To *OBEY* is better than sacrifice. (1 Sam. 15: 22.)

It is the humble and dutiful *obedience* to *God*, which makes us acceptable to Him.

All other observance, not conforming thereto, is a *VAIN* show.

What excuse can there be, for turning from God's word,—from rules which *He has prescribed?*

Can we, propound as a religious act,—no matter, how good the purpose, or what our intention may be, or with what *PIETY*, or devotion we assume, while we *ignore* the *spirit* of *obedience*, by disregarding the words of our Lord?

Why should we do some religious act, in a way, contrary to our Lord's command?

To say, that we do it as an act of worship, does not make it an act of *piety*.

Do we not, thereby, set ourselves up as against God, as judges, which is the proper, or best way?

Is not our act a direct affront,—an open insult upon God's infinite wisdom?

All opposition to our Lord's command is *sin* against *Him*.

If we are stubborn, and will not submit to Him, then we are guilty of *iniquity* and *idolatry*. (1 Sam. 15:23.)

“The wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience.” (Col. 3:6.)

Certainly those that wilfully continue in doing that which they are commanded not to do, or do a particular thing in a *wrong way*, in a different

way from that which they are directed, are, I fear, not exempt from that *WRATH*.

Under our own laws,—formed on the moral law,—it is a misfeasance to do a lawful act, in an unlawful manner. It would be murder to intentionally, take any one's life, except in the way that the law provides.

Job speaks of man, “being born like a wild ass's colt.” (Job 11:12.) And we read that “The stork \* knoweth her appointed time; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord.” (Jer. 8:7.)

And how is our intelligence compared with the ox and the ass?

“The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know. My people doth not consider.” (Isa. 1:3.)

How silly it is, then,—if we say nothing worse,—for us to be *vain*, and follow our own ideas, when God has told us, in this instance, just what we should, or should not do.

We should not be carried away, with some new-fangled, or vain ceremony,—“the traditions of men,” particularly where there is Scripture against it.



Why imagine a vain thing and then practice it?  
(Acts 4:25; Pa. 2:1.)

And that in the *worship* of *God*!

God said to the Jews for their multiplied <sup>s</sup>facts and un-commanded sacrifice: “Bring no more *VAIN* oblations.” Away with it.—“*It is iniquity.*” (Isa. 1:13.)

“I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers. I will not hear.” (Isa. 1:15.) Do public prayers over the money appeal to you?

God says, in substance to *all*, who do, *anything*, that does not agree with His laws, however *plausible*, however *good* and *acceptable* they may *APPEAR* to *THEM*, that He wants *none of IT*,—He wants nothing but that which is in accordance with His word—His will.

“Now, on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against Me”? (2 Kings 18:20; Isa. 36:5.)

Jeremiah tells us: “The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed; \* \* they have rejected the word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them?” (Jer. 8:9.)

This was said of and concerning the Jews.

God being provoked with them, on account of their sins, destroyed them and their Temple, and gave them over to their enemies, as He before had done the other ten tribes.

God is no respecter of persons. (2 Chron. 19:7; Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:9.)

Should we not profit by their experience?

Is there no danger that the light of God's word will be removed from us, if we abuse or disregard it?

Should we not have a wholesome fear and dread of God's judgment upon us, if we commence disregarding His word, or to slight what He has said?

It is the great enemy of mankind who would dishearten the soul of man from a dependence upon God.

It is, in a great measure carelessness and indifference to God's laws, that leads some to be thoughtless of, or neglect and disregard them, and others follow the world, and belie God for their own purpose.

We are to, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean *not ON* thy own understanding." (Prov. 3:5.)

"In *all* thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall *direct* thy *paths*." (Id. 6.)

We acknowledge God by being obedient to His word; otherwise He has not promised, that *He will direct our paths*. No one can be *earnest* in worshiping God, when they do things contrary to God's word, and if people are *robbed* of earnest-

ness in part of the worship of God, then there is great danger, that *that* will in time, undermine and destroy the spirit of worship in some, and induces others to stay away from church, and to others it may become their *IDOL*, they may think more of this *parade*, *prayer* and *praise* service than of *God's Word*;—not seeking Heavenly virtue and guidance.

We should be set strongly against any and all things, that we know, or *should know*, is against the word of God, or its teachings.

God has “not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth.” (Isa. 45:19.)

He has plainly told us, “let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thy alms may be in secret.” (Mat. 6:3-4.)

That is, all unnecessary acts, are to be avoided when collections in churches are to be made. No *parade*, *show*, or *ostentation* in the performance of a religious duty.

Every thing that looks like it is disapproved of, by our Lord.

A Christian's duty therein is modestly and silently shunning even the observance of others, looking only to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, for what we should do.

Knowing that every thought of our heart, and every secret motive of our action, that is good

and pure comes from God; and if our hearts are right, we want to carry out God's purpose. To show forth His will through our acts.

Every disobedience to God's Word must come from the *evil one*; and we will have to account therefor.

God exhorts Judah to repentance and says:

“How long shall thy *vain thoughts* lodge within thee?” (Jer. 4:14.)

“In vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” (Met. 15:9.)

We must be careful, that what we practice, is in accordance with the teachings of the Bible.

*Idolatry* is such a *great offence* to *GOD*, that *anything*, that *tends towards it*, should be avoided.

And here, He has given us a direct command.

And we do not *honor* God, if we do not, at least, *try* to follow *His Word*.

When our Lord was on earth, what example did He leave for us in this regard?

He “sat over against the treasury” one day, and saw the people cast money into the treasury, and “a poor woman came and threw in two mites.”

He called unto Him, Peter, James, John, Andrew, Matthew, Thomas and the other six. Now, what did He say to them? Did He say now I want you to make, or my disciples to make a



*parade, prayer and praise service* over collections in churches, to dedicate them to the service of God, and as a part of the public worship? No! Nothing of the kind. But, on the contrary, He said, “unto them, verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury.” (St. Mark 12: 41-43.)

Now, what is there to make a *parade, prayer or praise service* over, when a collection is taken up in a church, it may be less than a farthing?

Think of the poor woman making, or assenting to have, a *parade, prayer or praise service* made, in public, over her two mites!

And yet she gave more than all the others, though “many that were rich, cast in much.” (Mark 12: 43-44.)

Here is our Lord’s way. It needs no *parade or public prayer or praise service* to dedicate the same to Him, as an act of worship. Is it not more, to be seen of men? for God sees our hearts, and knows our very thoughts and circumstances, and what we have set apart for His service.

Though *no one*, of course, wants us to do things as hypocrits!

It was hypocrits that our Lord said, sounded a trumpet in the synagogues and in the streets,

that they may have glory of men," when they did their alms. (Mat. 6:2.)

Can we be *quite sure*, that we are pleasing our Lord more, when we take up our collections in the churches, and have a great and grand organ, the sound of which fills the whole church, and is heard in the street?

Is that more pleasing to our Lord, and does it show a more devout and sacred service of Him, than the hypocrits' trumpet, when we consider that now, we have our Lord's command and our disregard of God's Word?

We have no right to do some acts, that are our religious and our bounden duty to do, in a wrong way,—in a way different from that which God has commanded.

David tried that once, and the effect of it was, that great fear fell upon him, and caused the death of one man,—Uzzah.

He was doing that which was right, but, probably thoughtlessly, in a wrong way,—in a way differently from what God had commanded.

He was following, if not the world, the Philistines, certainly not the Lord's directions.

We must seek God's guidance, if we want His approval in what we do. If we willfully disregard God's word; or do ignorantly that which is contrary thereto, when we can, and should know

better, how can we expect God's blessing to rest upon us?

And to do, as a religious act, or to try to lead others to do so, in following some church, in an act, that is not required by God's word, in the worship of Him, is a form of contempt of that word.

Can God give entire success to Christian work, when people will not try to follow His word?

Can we expect great revivals in churches, if we do not at least *try* in all respects to follow God's word?

If we disregard God's word in any respect, will it not in time have a tendency to draw some away from that word, if not away from church?

Having in the church service, something that is not in accordance with God's word; or that is not required thereby, and which is an innovation in church service, and which had not been practiced for nearly two thousand years, if ever, and now to commence such a practice, and to force the same upon all that come to church, can that be considered laboring for the Master?

Shall we "cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despise the word of the Holy One of Israel?" (Isa. 5:24).

We know there is to come a "falling away."

Is not that from the true worship of God?

Is it not a desertion from our faith and principles in, and reliance upon, God's word?

Is departing from God's word a step towards that "*falling away?*" (2 Thes. 2:3.)

Let us be aware that the light of God's word may be removed from us. It certainly has been from one Christian church, when it worships a false mediator; and denies to some what God says is honorable to all—marriage. God gives us, that one *RULE* that is to guide us in life,—that is, not only to follow His word,—but to *love it*,—and to love it because it is *the truth*; and if we *do not*, God may *make us believe a lie*. (2 Thes. 2:10-11.)

We are all to be "watchmen upon the house of Israel," and to warn others, if we do not their blood may be upon us. (Eze. 3:17-20; Id. 33:7-16.)

Following worldliness, which we are very apt to do, not seeking heavenly guidance even in the worship of God, is *Idolatry*.

God says: "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with ~~mine~~ mine eye." (Pa. 32:8.)

"He will be our guide unto death." (Pa. 48:14.)

"His spirit will guide you into all truth." (John 16:13.)

But! we must be *willing* and *obedient* and allow Him to guide us. Do not let "the anger of the



Lord be kindled against'' us, because we ''have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel''; (Isa. 5: 24-25) or have commenced to do so. We do not honor God, if we do not at least *try* to follow *His word*: And nothing should induce us, to turn from it, or to practice things, in worshiping Him, that He does not command.

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